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STATE PASS USTR FOR STROJE, NOVELLI
STATE PASS USDA FOR APHIS:SMCCAMMON, USDA/FAS:BLUM
USDA/FAS/ITT:EJONES, USDA/FAS/OA:SLUTSKY USDA/OS/HEGWOOD STATE PASS FDA FOR EFLAMM EPA FOR OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATOR NSC FOR EDSON

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TAGS: EAGR ECON ETRD IT PREL TBIO ECON ETRD I

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CLASSIFIED BY: CLASSIFIED BY A/ECMIN DAVID MULENEX; REASON 1.5 B/D.

11. (C) SUMMARY. THIS COMPANION PIECE TO REF A PROVIDES
ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND, SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS FOR SENIOR
WASHINGTON OFFICIALS, AND POST ACTION STRATEGY IN RESPONSE TO
THE DELIBERATELY MISLEADING WHITE PAPER ON BIOTECHNOLOGY PUT
IN CIRCULATION BY THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE.
AMBASSADOR AND EMBOFFS HAVE STRONGLY CRITICIZED THE WHITE
PAPER AT HIGH LEVELS OF THE GOI AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO.
USING TALKING POINTS CONTAINED PARA 15, WE RECOMMEND THAT
SENIOR USG OFFICIALS DIRECTLY CONFRONT KEY GOI LEADERS ON THE
PAPER'S MOST SERIOUS MISSTATEMENTS -- THAT BIOTECH IS
"POLLUTION," THAT U.S.-ORIGIN SEEDS ARE FLAWED, THAT BIOTECH
MAY CAUSE THE NEXT BSE-TYPE EPIDEMIC, AND MORE. BECAUSE SOME
VARIETY OF POLICY PAPER INEVITABLY WILL BE INTRODUCED IN
PARLIAMENT, THE USG SHOULD TRY TO PERSUADE THE GOI TO DRAFT A
DOCUMENT BASED ON SOUND SCIENCE RATHER THAN SCARE-MONGERING. CONFIDENTIAL

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SENIOR WASHINGTON INVOLVEMENT IS INDISPENSABLE TO REMIND PM
BERLUSCONI THAT HE IS A FRIEND OF BIOTECH AND THAT ITALY'S
INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE DEMANDS A REVISITING OF THIS DOCUMENT.
DEPENDING ON THE RESULTS OF ACTIONS TAKEN PURSUANT TO REF APPOST MAY RECOMMEND THAT WASHINGTON INVOLVEMENT CULMINATE IN A
DIRECT COMMUNICATION BETWEEN EITHER SECRETARY POWELL OR
DEPENDENT BISH AND REPLISCONT (SEP DADA 12.14) FMD SIMMADY PRESIDENT BUSH AND BERLUSCONI (SEE PARA 12-14). END SUMMARY.

ALEMANNO'S WHITE PAPER: ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

- 12. (SBU) AS DETAILED REF B, THE ITALIAN AGRICULTURE MINISTRY IS CIRCULATING AN UNDATED AND UNSIGNED WHITE PAPER ENTITLED "TRANSGENIC ORGANISMS AND AGRICULTURE: A TIME FOR CHOICES" ULTIMATELY INTENDED TO STIMULATE BIOTECH DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT. ANNOUNCING ON ITS SECOND OF 37 PAGES THAT THE EU IS SLOWLY LIBERALIZING RULES FOR USE OF "TRANSGENIC ORGANISMS," THE PAPER SOUNDS AN ALARM THAT ITALY'S CONTINUED DELAY IN DEBATING BIOTECHNOLOGY COULD LEAD BY DEFAULT TO A PROGRESSIVE PENETRATION OF THE ITALIAN MARKET BY TRANSGENIC PRODUCTS. THE PAPER URGES IMMEDIATE DEBATE BEFORE THE QUESTION BECOMES MOOT AND ITALIANS HAVE BEEN DEPRIVED OF FREEDOM OF CHOICE ON AN ISSUE WITH PROFOUND ETHICAL, SANITARY, AND ECONOMIC REPERCUSSIONS. SANITARY, AND ECONOMIC REPERCUSSIONS
- 13. (SBU) THE PAPER ALLEGES THAT EFFORTS TO DATE TO CALMLY EVALUATE THE POTENTIAL RISKS AND BENEFITS OF BIOTECHNOLOGY IN ITALY HAVE RESULTED ONLY IN IDEOLOGICAL POLARIZATION. CONFIDENTIAL
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 PRESUMABLY IN ORDER TO HELP FRAME A HIGHER ORDER OF DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT, THE PAPER SUGGESTS THAT THE ISSUE PRESENTED FOR CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE: "WHETHER THE TRANSGENIC OPTION IS COHERENT AND COMPATIBLE WITH THE PRODUCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS AND THE PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF OUR FOOD SYSTEM, LET ALONE WITH THE EXPECTATIONS THAT THE CITIZENS NURTURE REGARDING THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE IN SOCIETY." NOTE. QUOTES FROM THE WHITE PAPER ARE INFORMAL EMBASSY TRANSLATIONS THROUGHOUT. END NOTE THROUGHOUT. END NOTE
- 14. (SBU) THE REMAINDER OF THE PAPER IS OSTENSIBLY AN EFFORT TO EXPLORE THIS QUESTION AND TO POSE DERIVATIVE QUESTIONS WITHOUT PRESUMING TO PRE-EMPT THE DEBATE BY SUGGESTING DIRECT ANSWERS. THE DEBATE CONTEXTS THE PAPER WOULD EVIDENTLY LIKE PARLIAMENT TO ADOPT APPEAR IN THREE SUBSECTIONS, ENTITILED: "TRANSGENIC PRODUCTS AND THE PRODUCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ITALIAN FOOD SYSTEM;" TRANSGENIC PRODUCTS AND THE TERRITORIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR AGRICULTURE;" AND "TRANSGENIC PRODUCTS AND THE CONSUMER." AT BASE, THE "PRODUCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS" OF THE ITALIAN AGRICULTURE SYSTEM TURN OUT TO BE VARIOUS ITALIAN PROGRAMS ATTACHING "TRADITIONAL" DESIGNATIONS TO SOME 3,000 AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS HAVE WON FOR ITALIAN AGRICULTURE, AND THE INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION FOR "QUALITY" THESE PRODUCTS HAVE WON FOR ITALIAN AGRICULTURE, AND THE "EXPECTATION" OF ITALIANS TURNS OUT TO BE THAT ITALY

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WILL CONTINUE TO EMPHASIZE QUALITY OVER QUANTITY IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.

15. (C) THE READER NEED NOT BE PARTICULARLY DISCERNING IN ORDER TO FIND A STRONG ANTI-BIOTECH THEME BETWEEN THE LINES OF THE PAPER. THE SHAPE OF THE DEBATE THE PAPER WOULD FOSTER EMERGES FROM THE DERIVATIVE PRESUMPTIONS AND QUESTIONS PRESENTED IN THESE THREE SUBSECTIONS. THE PAPER CLEVERLY LINKS BIOTECHNOLOGY TO TWO OF THE MAJOR BOGGEYMEN IN TTALIAN PUBLIC OPINION -- GLOBALIZATION AND MAD COW DISSASE. GLOBALIZATION IN THIS CONTEXT REFERS TO A SMALL CLIQUE OF HUGE MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS (MOSTLY AMERICAN) THAT MANUFACTURE HIGH VOLUME, LOW COST, "ENCINEERED" FOODS THAT "TEND INEVITABLY TO INTRODUCE A FLATTENING" OF QUALITY IN FAVOR OF COST CONTAINMENT AND PROFIT MAXIMIZATION. THE CONSUMER VIEW IS PRESENTED PRIMARILY BY SUMMARIZING A PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY FINDING THAT ITALIANS MAY ACCEPT AGRICULTURAL BIOTECH AS A MEANS OF FEDLING THE THIRD WORLD, BUT 79 PERCENT BELIEVE ITS INTRODUCTION HERE WOULD DAMAGE THE ITALIAN FOOD CONFIDENTIAL

ROME 01726 02 OF 05 080658Z SYSTEM. BSE IS SLIPPED INTO A DISCUSSION OF THE POTENTIAL PROPAGATION OF BIOTECH SEEDS AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE HORRORS THAT CAN DERIVE FROM A BIOLOGICAL PHENORMON THAT MAY BE CONTROLLABLE TODAY BUT MAY NOT BE CONTROLLABLE TOMORROW.

HAVE YOU STOPPED BEATING YOUR WIFE AND OTHER QUESTIONS FOR

16. (C) THE PAPER WINDS THROUGH A MURKY MIXTURE OF DERIVATIVE QUESTIONS OFFERED FOR DEBATE AND PUTATIVE SCIENTIFIC AXIOMS THAT PROGRESSIVELY STEER THE DISCUSSION TOWARDS ANTI-BIOTRECH POLITICAL CONCLUSIONS AND AWAY FROM SCIENCE-BASED DEBATE. THE SUBSECTION ON THE ITALIAN FOOD SYSTEM IS ILLUSTRATIVE. THE SUBSECTION FIRST SUGGESTS, RATHER NEUTRALLY, THAT "THE QUESTION POSED IS WHETHER AND IN WHAT MEASURE THE DECISION TO IMPROVE QUALITY CAN BE COMPATIBLE WITH USE OF TRANSGENIC ORGANISMS." IN CASE THE READER HAS DIFFICULTY ANSWERING THE QUESTION, THE PAPER OFFERS A LESS SUBTLE REPHRASING: "WE MUST CALMLY EVALUATE WHETHER THE IMAGE AND CREDIBILITY OF OUR FOOD SYSTEM CAN BE DAMAGED BY THE PRESENCE OF TRANSGENIC ORGANISMS THAT, LEAVING ASIDE CONSIDERATION OF NEGATIVE AFFECTS ON HEALTH AND FOOD QUALITY, CARRY A STIGMA OF INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING THAT APPEARS TO BE IN COMPLETE CONFLICT WITH THE WORLD'S IMAGE OF OUR FOOD PRODUCTS." FOR THE TRULY DENSE, THE PAPER PROVIDES A SLEDGEHAMMER THIRD FORMULATION: "THIS EVALUATION MUST, MOREOVER, TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE COLLECTIVE INTEREST IN PRESERVING THE BIOLOGIC PATRIMONY OF OUR AGRICULTURE FROM THE INEVITABLE GENETIC POLLUTION DERIVING CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 ROME 01726 02 OF 05 080658Z FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF TRANSGENIC ORGANISMS."

17. (C) THE SUBSECTION ON ITALIAN LAND AND ENVIRONMENT ALSO SHOWS PROGRESSIVE SHRILLNESS AND LOSS OF OBJECTIVITY. THE SUBSECTION FIRST SUGGESTS THAT "RELATIONS OF THE DIVERSE FORMS OF AGRICULTURE AMONG THEMSELVES AND BETWEEN THEM AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS ARE TWO ASPECTS TO CONSIDER WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION AS WE EVALUATE THE BENEFITS OF USING OR NOT USING TRANSGENIC PRODUCTS." A BLAND DISCUSSION OF THE DESIRABILITY OF AVOIDING POLLUTION QUICKLY MORPHS TO A CONDENNATION OF "GENETIC POLLUTION" AND WE HAVE: "WE MUST BE AWARE THAT THE EVENTUAL IMPOSSIBILITY OF SEPARATING THE TWO LINES (GMO AND GMO-FREE) AND AVOIDING GENETIC POLLUTION COULD PRODUCE A STUDATION OF OBVIOUS INCOMPATIBILITY WITH THE MAINTENBACE OF ACTIVITIES — SUCH AS ORGANIC FARMING AND PRODUCTION OF QUALITY PRODUCTS (FOR EXAMPLE PARMIGIANN CHEESE) — THAT DO NOT ALLOW EITHER USE OR CONTAMINATION BY TRANSGENIC PRODUCTS." THE SUBSECTION ENDS BY REMOVING ANY PRETENSE OF OBJECTIVITY: "IT IS EVIDENT THAT USE OF TRANSGENIC PRODUCTS COULD PRODUCE POLLUTION THAT COULD MEAN THE LOSS OF THOSE CHARACTERISTICS THAT TODAY DIFFERENTIATE OUR AGRICULTURE IN THE MARKETPLACE." PRESUMBALLY, PARLIAMENT IS LEFT TO DEBATE WHETHER ITALY SHOULD ALLOW CHEAP, LOW QUALITY IMPORTS INTO ITS MARKET IN THE CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE THAT DOING SO WILL DESTROY ITALIAN AGRICULTURE.

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18. (C) THE ITALIAN FOOD SYSTEM SUBSECTION NEVER RETURNS TO THE LEFT ASIDE DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE HEALTH AND FOOD QUALITY EFFECTS OF BIOTECH. IN FACT, SO MARGINALIZED IS SCIENCE IN THIS DOCUMENT THAT NOWHERE IN ITS 37 PAGES ARE THE SUPPOSEDLY AXIOMATIC HEATH AND FOOD QUALITY EFFECTS DOCUMENTED. ALEMANNO'S EVIDENT FEAR OF SCIENCE (HE IS A HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATE WHO CLAIMED NO EXPERTISE IN AGRICULTURE PRIOR TO LANDING THE JOB AS MINISTER) LEAVES MANY OF THE PAPER'S CONCLUSIONS HANGING WITHOUT FOUNDATION AND MAY MAKE EASIER THE TASK OF OPPOSING THE PROPOSED POLICY. RATHER THAN SUMMARIZING REASONED SCIENTIFIC CONCERN ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR MAINTAINING A BIOTECH-FREE PRODUCTION OPTION WHEN CONVENTIONAL SEEDS ARE PLANTED IN PROXIMITY TO BIOTECH SEEDS, THE SUBSECTION ON LAND AND THE ENVIRONMENT CONDEMNS ALL BIOTECH PRODUCTS AS EVENTUALLY AND INEVITABLY POLLUTING ITALIAN PRODUCTION OR CONTAMINATING THE IMAGE OF ITALIAN PRODUCTS.

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WORST OF THE REST

 $\underline{\ }$ 9. (SBU) FOLLOWING IS COMMENTARY ON OTHER PROBLEMATIC ASPECTS OF THE WHITE PAPER.

-- REJECT U.S. SEEDS. THE PAPER SUGGESTS THAT "THE PHENOMENON OF UNCONTROLLED CONTAMINATION" BY TRANSGENIC ORGANISMS CAN BE AVOIDED ONLY BY ENACTING INCENTIVES FOR ITALIAN SEED SELF-SUFFIENCY AND, IN THE MEANWHILE, BY DEVELOPING SUPPLY CHANNELS WITH COUNTRIES THAT CAN CERTIFY SEEDS AS BIOTECH-FREE AND AVOIDING IMPORT OF SEEDS FROM OTHER SOURCES AND, IN PARTICULAR, THE "UNITED STATES FROM WHERE, ACCORDING TO THE CHECKS EFFECTED BY THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH, MOST CONTAMINATED SEEDS ORIGINATE." IN MAKING THIS DISCRIMINATORY SUGGESTION, THE PAPER MAKES NO MENTION THAT THE U.S. SEED PRODUCERS CAN, FOR A PREMIUM, PRODUCE CERTIFIED GMO-FREE SEED.

-- SCIENCE: PERSUASION BY OMISSION. IN THE NAME OF
ELIMINATING "USELESS AND DAMAGING" POLEMICS, THE PAPER SIMPLY
OMITS OPPOSING ARGUMENTS. NOT A SINGLE SCIENTIFIC CITATION
IS INCLUDED IN THE 37 PAGE PAPER, AND THE FIFTEEN YEARS OF EU
FUNDED RESEARCH RECENTLY SUMMARIZED IN A EUROPEAN COMMISSION
REPORT IS NOT MENTIONED. THE ADVANCES IN ITALIAN
BIOTECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING VIRAL AND FUNCAL RESISTANT PRODUCTS
NOW READY FOR FIELD TESTING, ARE IGNORED. THE ENVIRONMENTAL
BENEFITS OF REDUCED USAGE OF HERBICIDES AND PESTICIDES, AS
WELL THE PRODUCTION BENEFITS OF DROUGHT TOLERANCE AND STRESS
RESISTANCE ARE OVERLOOKED. THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO
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PAGE 04 ROME 01726 03 OF 05 080659Z DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ARE QUICKLY SHUNTED ASIDE AS NOT RELEVANT TO QUALITY CONSCIOUS ITALIAN CONSUMERS.

-- INTERPRET EU SAFEGUARDS CLAUSE AS OPT-OUT CLAUSE. THE PAPER DESCRIBES ARTICLE 16 OF EU DIRECTIVE 90/220 AND ARTICLE 12 OF RULE 258/97 AS RESERVING TO INDIVIDUAL MEMBER STATES THE RIGHT "TO SUSPEND COMMERCIALIZATION ON ITS TERRITORY OF A TRANSGENIC PRODUCT WHENEVER THAT STATE DETERMINES, FOR VALID SCIENTIFIC REASONS, THAT IT IS NOXIOUS FOR HUMAN HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT. ARTICLE 23 OF NEW EU DIRECTIVE 2001/18, ACCORDING TO THE WHITE PAPER, CONTINUES TO ALLOW INDIVIDUAL MEMBER STATES TO LIMIT OR PROHIBIT THE USE OR SALE ON ITS TERRITORY OF ANY PRODUCT AUTHORIZED BY THE COMMISSION."
PERHAPS LOOKING TO EXPAND ON ITALY'S OWN PRECEDENT, THE PAPER MAKES NO MENTION OF THE "VALID SCIENTIFIC REASON"
PERERQUISITE TO WHICH THE GOI AT LEAST PAID LIP SERVICE IN ENACTING ITS 2000 BAN ON FOUR VARIETIES OF BIOTECH CORN APPROVED FOR COMMERCIALIZATION BY THE EU.

-- ITALY CAN REJECT BIOTECH WITHOUT VIOLATING EU NORMS. THE PAPER SUGGESTS THAT ITALY MAY CHOOSE TO GO ITS OWN WAY ON BIOTECH POLICY. "WITHOUT DOUBT RECENT EVOLUTION OF EU LEGISLATION INTRODUCES A GROWING OPENING TO THE USE OF BIOTECHNOLOGY. THIS, HOWEVER, DOES NOT MEAN THAT, WITH ALL DUE RESPECT FOR THE NORMS, OUR FOOD SYSTEM CANNOT CHOOSE ITS

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OWN WAY OF DEVELOPMENT UNLINKED TO TRANSGENICS. FORSEEING GREATER OPENING FOR TRANSGENIC ORGANISMS DOES NOT MEAN, IN FACT, A PROHIBITION THAT, IF DEEMED BENEFICIAL, WE COULD FOLLOW THE OBJECTIVE OF HAVING AN GMO-FREE FOOD SYSTEM."

WHAT WE ARE DOING ABOUT IT

- 110. (C) POST REACTED QUICKLY AND STRONGLY TO THE ADVENT OF THE WHITE PAPER. AMBASSADOR SEMBLER MET SEPARATELY WITH MINISTER OF HEALTH SIRCHIA AND MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH MORATTI, FOUND EACH UNAWARE OF THE PAPER, PRESENTED COPIES, AND -- AFTER ELICITING REACTIONS FAVORABLE TO OUR INTERESTS -- POINTED THEM TO EACH OTHER AS POTENTIAL ALLIES WITHIN THE BERLUSCONI CABINET. SIRCHIA HAS ASKED FOR A POSITION PAPER FROM US AND MORATTI ASKED FOR TALKING POINTS SHE MIGHT USE WITHIN THE GOI. BOTH WILL BE DELIVERED THIS WEEK. THE AMBASSADOR ALSO WROTE ENVIRONMENT MINISTER CONFIDENTIAL
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 MATTEOLI TO ASK HIS ASSISTANCE IN FURTHERING SCIENCE-BASED
 DISCUSSIONS. VISITING CONGRESSMAN BILL YOUNG MADE SIMILAR
 APPROACHES TO HIS LONG-TIME FRIEND AND PROTEGE DEPUTY PRIME
 MINISTER GIANFRANCO FINI AND TO DEPUTY MINISTER FOR
 INTERNATIONAL TRADE ADOLFO URSO AT THE AMBASSADOR'S REQUEST.
 THE DCM MET WITH GIANI CASTELLANETA, PM BERLUSCONI'S TOP
 DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR, EDUCATED HIM ON THE ISSUE, AND ELICITED A
 PROMISE TO LOOK CAREFULLY INTO OUR CONCERNS.
- 111. (C) BY SEPTEL, THE AMBASSADOR IS APPEALING DIRECTLY TO AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VENNEMAN, EPA ADMINISTRATOR WHITMAN, UNDERSECRETARY LARSON, AND NSC SENIOR ADVISOR EDSON TO COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH THEIR ITALIAN COUNTERPARTS.
 APPROPRIATE TALKING POINTS, ETC. ARE BEING COORDINATED
 BETWEEN POST AND WASHINGTON AGENCIES.

WHAT MORE WE SHOULD DO ABOUT IT

- 112. (C) AS POST REPEATS IN EVERY AVAILABLE CONTEXT, THE GOI 112. (C) AS POST REPEATS IN EVERY AVAILABLE CONTEXT, THE GOI DECISIONS ON BIOTECH ULTIMATELY ARE TAKEN BY ONLY ONE SOURCE -- PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI. MINISTER ALEMANNO HAS TAKEN THE INITIATIVE SIMPLY BECAUSE THE PM HAS BEEN SILENT FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, AND A VACUUM HAS THUS BEEN CREATED. BERLUSCONI CAN CERTAINLY REIN IN ALEMANNO AT THIS POINT, ALTHOUGH THAT CONTROL BECOMES MOOT WHEN PARLIAMENT GETS THE DOCUMENT AND BEGINS ITS OWN DEBATE.
- 13. (C) WE HAVE BEEN SURPRISED BY THE LACK OF AWARENESS EVEN OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE ALEMANNO WHITE PAPER WITHIN THE GOI.

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 THE COPIES DISTRIBUTED WITHIN THE VARIOUS MINISTRIES SEEM TO
 HAVE COME ONLY FROM US. WE ARE PUTTING TOGETHER A CLIQUE OF
 RIGHT-MINDED MINISTERS WITHIN THE CABINET AND BRIEFING SENIOR
 ADVISORS ACROSS THE GOI.
- 114. (C) HOWEVER, THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR USG COMMUNICATION WITH THE PM. BERLUSCONI IS, AT LEAST FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS, ITALY'S FOREIGN MINISTER AS WELL AS ITS PRIME MINISTER. SECRETARY POWELL, THEREFORE, WOULD HAVE A PROTOCOL ENTREE WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BERLUSCONI THAT MAY PROVE OF GREAT VALUE AND PAVE THE WAY FOR A PRESIDENT BUSH-PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI COMMUNICATION. DEPENDING ON THE RESULTS OF ACTIONS TAKEN PURSUANT TO REF A, POST MAY RECOMMEND THAT WASHINGTON INVOLVEMENT CULMINATE IN THIS HIGHER LEVEL DIRECT COMMUNICATION. COMMUNICATION.
- 115. (SBU) THE FOLLOWING ARE SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS FOR USE IN PRIMING THE VARIOUS COMMUNICATION CHANNELS WE PROPOSE

-- THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE IS CIRCULATING AN UNSIGNED DRAFT PAPER ENTITLED "TRANSGENIC ORGANISMS AND AGRICULTURE: THE TIME FOR CHOICES." PRESUMBABLY THIS IS AN EARLY VERSION OF THE POLICY PAPER MINISTER ALEMANNO HAS ANNOUNCED HE INTENDS TO BRING BEFORE THE PARLIAMENT.

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- -- LATER THIS YEAR, THE EU WILL BEGIN IMPLEMENTING PROCEDURES FOR APPROVING NEW FOOD PRODUCTS, INCLUDING BIOTECHNOLOGY FOOD PRODUCTS, FOR COMMERCIALIZATION ACROSS THE EU COMMON MARKET. THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION WILL CONTINUE TO CONSIDER PROPOSALS FOR MONITORING BIOTECHNOLOGY FOOD PRODUCTS ALREADY APPROVED.
- -- AS A MEMBER STATE, IT IS OF COURSE PERFECTLY APPROPRIATE THAT ITALY DEVELOP NATIONAL POSITIONS AS EVENTS IN BRUSSELS GET UNDERWAY.
- -- MINISTER ALEMANNO INTENDS TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION LEADING ULTIMATELY TO A NATIONAL BIOTECHNOLOGY POLICY. AGAIN, THAT IS OF COURSE PERFECTLY APPROPRIATE.
- -- THIS PAPER, HOWEVER, IS OF SERIOUS CONCERN TO MANY IN THE SCIENTIFIC AND BUSINESS COMMUNITIES. THE PAPER DISMISSES SCIENCE AS A DISRUPTIVE INFLUENCE IN POLICY DELIBERATIONS AND WOULD BASE ITALIAN BIOTECHNOLOGY POLICY ON PUBLIC OPINION CONFIDENTIAL
- PAGE 03 ROME 01726 05 OF 05 080659Z SURVEYS AND THE BASELESS PRONOUNCEMENT THAT BIOTECHNOLOGY IS "POLLUTION" FROM WHICH ITALY MUST BE PROTECTED.
- -- CONTINUING IN THIS VEIN, THE PAPER PLAYS UPON PUBLIC FEARS BY ASSOCIATING BIOTECHNOLOGY WITH THE FORCES OF GLOBALIZATION AND EVEN HINTS, WITH NO SCIENTIFIC BASIS WHATSOEVER, THAT BIOTECHNOLOGY MAY TRIGGER THE NEXT BSE-TYPE EPIDEMIC.
- -- SOME MONTHS AGO, PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI REFORMED THE COMMISSION FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY AND BIOSECURITY, CHAIRED BY PROFESSOR LEGNARDO SANTI, TO HELP SHAPE THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON BIOTECHNOLOGY. THE SANTI COMMISSION INCLUDES REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL ITALIAN MINISTRIES AS WELL AS INTERESTED PARTIES FROM INDUSTRY AND CONSUMER GROUPS.
- -- THE PSEUDO-SCIENCE INCLUDED IN THE AGRICULTURE MINISTRY'S PAPER MAKES CLEAR THAT THE SANTI COMMISSION WAS NOT CONSULTED IN ITS DRAFTING. NEITHER, EVIDENTLY, WAS THE BROADER SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY. RATHER, THE PAPER APPEARS TO BE THE PRODUCT OF SPECIAL INTERESTS AND A SMALL GROUP OF ANTI-BIOTECH ZEALOTS PURSUING THEIR OWN AGENDA.
- -- THIS PAPER NEEDS TO BE CORRECTED BEFORE IT GETS TO PARLIAMENT AND STARTS TO BUILD MOMENTUM.
- --- THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S SANTI COMMISSION IS MADE INTEGRAL TO ITALIAN BIOTECHNOLOGY POLICY DEVELOPMENT.MADE INTEGRAL TO ITALIAN BIOTECHNOLOGY POLICY DEVELOPMENT.

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